

# CASE ACTIVITY

# 4-B



Job Performance  
Situation 4:  
Building Collaboration  
in Head Start

HEAD START  
*MOVING AHEAD*  
COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING PROGRAM



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## REFERENCE

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This activity presents a type of situation that Head Start Federal and grantee staff often encounter. The activity prepares participants to begin training activities in three skill categories: managing your role in collaboration, negotiating and formalizing agreements, and influencing others. Learners will analyze a hypothetical Head Start case and will draw on their individual experiences in meeting similar situations.

Related skill activities include 3-C, Facilitation: Fundamentals of Leading Meetings; 3-E, Communication: Effective Spoken Communication; 3-F, Communication: Active Listening Skills; 4-C, Collaboration: Managing Your Role; 4-D, Collaboration: Negotiating and Formalizing Agreements; 4-E, Influencing Others: Applying Basic Skills; 5-C, Conflict Resolution: Understanding the Elements; and 5-D, Presentations: Developing Effective Presentations.

## OVERVIEW

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### METRO-CITY EARLY HEAD START

**Outcomes.** Participants who complete this activity will be able to put themselves in the shoes of other Head Start staff in order to consider the challenges presented by a common job performance situation. They will assess the role played by the presence or absence of skills in managing their role in collaboration, negotiating and formalizing agreements, and influencing others. Learners will analyze a hypothetical Head Start situation and draw upon their individual experiences in meeting similar situations.

**Materials.** Newsprint and markers.

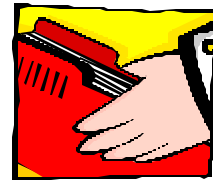
**Components.** This activity can be completed by one person, an informal group, or as part of a formal workshop. Suggested time limits are provided below, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Handout: Metro-City Early Head Start	10 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Case Questions and Discussion	20 min.
Suggested total time	30 min.

This activity contains 6 pages.

# STEP 1. HANDOUT: METRO-CITY EARLY HEAD START

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Suggested time: 10 min.

Read and reflect on the following case to deepen your understanding of the situation—not to address the problems or find solutions. Following this activity, participants will work on specific skill-building activities. Participants will then have the opportunity to come back to the scenario and, in an application activity, apply their increased skill competencies to addressing the issues it presents.

## **Metro-City Early Head Start**

Terry has been the director of Metro-City Early Head Start (EHS) for 2 months. When she was hired, the Early Head Start grant had just been awarded to Metro-City as a result of the Federal defunding process. The prior EHS grantee was asked to relinquish the grant after serious financial issues came to light in its Federal program review. As a resident of the community, Terry followed the story in the local newspaper. She was somewhat surprised when she learned that Metro-City was the successful applicant for the grant; she and other members of the community assumed that the city's Community Action Program (CAP) was the frontrunner. As the grantee for Metro-City's pre-school Head Start program, CAP seemed to be the natural choice.

When Metro-City won the grant, Terry seized the opportunity to be a part of this exciting initiative to increase community services for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. "The key phrase is 'more services,'" Terry thought to herself as she accepted the job. "Early Head Start is not the only program in the city to reach this population; we need strong collaborative efforts to really make this work."

Prompted by a discussion with Ron, the Federal program specialist, Terry decided to convene a stakeholder's meeting to discuss the role of EHS in the community. Ron suggested inviting Rosario, the region's liaison to the Office of Community Services. "One of Rosario's roles is to help build bridges in communities," he told Terry. "She may be able to suggest ways that you can begin a dialog."

Terry made sure to schedule the meeting so that Ron and Rosario could attend—she was counting on their support and guidance to make this work. She sent invitations to a targeted group of 10 agencies, including the Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), the city's maternity hospital, the Teen Parenting Program at the high school, and Early Intervention.

Although their agencies originally competed for this grant, Terry felt strongly that she must forge a positive relationship with the CAP; therefore, she made sure to include the director of the CAP among the invitees. Looking to the future, Terry could envision Metro-City and the CAP in a collaboration where EHS families were enrolled in CAP-sponsored family child-care homes and...“But wait, I’m getting ahead of myself,” thought Terry. “Let’s at least get some people to the table first!”

Terry had no idea how prophetic her thoughts would be when the day of the stakeholder’s meeting arrived. Feeling a bit anxious, she was glad when Ron and Rosario arrived early; however, her anxiety quickly turned to disappointment when only one other person came to the meeting. She was delighted to see, however, that the lone attendee was Lavinia, director of the CAP. Terry introduced Ron and Rosario and thanked Lavinia for coming. Then the four of them began some preliminary discussions about professional collaboration among their agencies.

As Lavinia was leaving she said to Terry, “Look, you have to understand why people were probably reluctant to come to this meeting. The former EHS grantee resisted all overtures from other agencies to discuss any type of partnership or collaboration venture. The program never made any efforts to become part of this community, and that behavior built resentment toward EHS. People will need to know that you are sincere about this effort before they commit their valuable time.”

Terry escorted Lavinia out and returned to the conference room, closing the door behind her. “What can I do?” she asked Ron and Rosario. “I’ve got to make this work.”

## STEP 2. WORKSHEET: CASE QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

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Suggested time: 20 min.

Part I (10 min.) Use the following questions to reflect on the case.

Question 1 applies only to grantee staff; Question 2 only to Federal staff; and Questions 3–5 to all participants.

1. **Grantee staff:** What about this situation seems familiar? What potential problems do you see coming up in the program? How will these problems affect areas of the program? How will they affect the program overall?

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2. **Federal staff:** What about this situation seems familiar? What potential problems do you see coming up in the program? What role can Federal staff play in helping the program director identify and address these problems?

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3. **Both:** From your experience, can you describe how the presence—or absence—of skills in managing your role in collaboration has affected day-to-day program operations?

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4. **Both:** From your experience, can you describe how the presence—or absence—of skills in negotiating and formalizing agreements has affected programs, both in the short term and long term?

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5. **Both:** From your experience, can you describe how the presence—or absence—of skills in influencing others has affected programs, both in the short term and long term?

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**Part II (10 min.)** If you are working in pairs or a group, discuss your answers, why you gave them, and any points of difference.